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THE MILITANT

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Build June 14 conference to free the Cuban Five!

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 23 JUNE 9, 2008

McCain and Obama spar over who will be best war president

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The debate has sharpened between Republican presidential candidate John McCain and likely Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama over who can be the most effective war president.

U.S. president George Bush, a Republican, used a speech marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel May 15 to suggest that those who negotiate with "terrorists and radicals" are guilty of appeasement.

In the past Obama has stated that he would negotiate "without preconditions" with governments targeted by Washington such as Cuba, Iran, Syria, north Korea, and Venezuela.

McCain, a former military officer who saw combat in Vietnam, echoed Bush's remarks. "The American people have every reason to doubt whether he has the strength, judgment, and determination to keep us safe," McCain said, speaking of Obama.

The Arizona senator continues to benefit from his record of sharp tactical differences with the Bush administration

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Carpenters in S.F. unite against racist attacks by company

BY JOEL BRITTON

SAN FRANCISCO—The fight of union carpenters here against racist discrimination directed at Black and at Latino workers in the construction industry is having an impact.

Work stoppages to protest racist mistreatment and worksite protests by carpenters and Black community activists have taken place over the past year at public housing renovation sites in the Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhoods.

A petition has been circulated denouncing construction bosses for stealing portions of the paychecks of Latino workers, who are mostly immigrants from Mexico. Last December, more than two dozen Black and Latino carpenters united to file a class-action lawsuit in Superior Court against the Apartment Investment Management Co. (AIMCO) and its subcontracting outfits.

The suit demands an end to the racist practices. It charges that qualified Black carpenters were repeatedly told there was no work available, while

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Students learn about Cuba at book event on California campus

Militant/Eric Simpson

May 20 panel at the University of California, Davis. From left: UC student Ana Ochoa; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *Our History Is Still Being Written*; Wendy Ho, director of Asian American Studies; and Luz Mena, Women and Gender Studies professor.

BY BETSEY STONE AND ROBBY SILVER

DAVIS, California—Students involved in working-class struggles and attracted to the example of the Cuban Revolution put their stamp on a May 20 meeting at the University of California Davis (UCD) on the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.*

The meeting was sponsored by the Asian American Studies Department, Women and Gender Studies, and Pathfinder Books. A majority of the 70 participants were students, including several who had studied abroad in Cuba. Members of the campus chapter of MEChA (Chicano Student Movement

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297 Iowa meat packers are railroaded to jail

Convicted on 'identity theft' charges

Associated Press

Workers are led in shackles to court set up at Cattle Congress fairgrounds in Waterloo, Iowa, May 14. Most were sentenced to five months in jail.

BY SETH GALINSKY

DES MOINES—Of the 389 immigrant workers arrested as part of the May 12 raid at Agriprocessors Inc., in Postville, Iowa, 297 were sentenced on federal felony charges at the end of May. Most were charged with using false documentation or with "false use" of a Social Security number to obtain employment.

In what the *New York Times* called "unusually swift proceedings" at the National Cattle Congress fairgrounds in Waterloo, Iowa, the workers—shackled hand and foot—were herded in groups of 10 into mobile trailers and a dance hall used as makeshift courtrooms. The sentencing ran for four days from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The 297 workers accepted plea bargains in which they had to agree to cooperate with the U.S. government in a possible criminal investigation against Agriprocessors. Most were sentenced to five months in jail followed by immediate deportation to Guatemala or Mexico. Five of those in detention are still awaiting trial. Sixty-two were released with electronic ankle bracelets on "humanitarian grounds," such as having young children to take care of, as they await court hearings. Many of those who

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'Militant' Fund concludes with $108,600 in donations

BY ANGEL LARISCY

With all contributions tallied, *Militant* supporters in every area met or surpassed their quota, bringing the $100,000 Militant Fund drive to a successful conclusion. More than $108,600—9 percent over the international goal—was raised in eight weeks. Congratulations to all those who helped raise money and contributed to the fund!

The drive ran concurrently with the successful effort to win more than 2,500 new readers to the paper. Supporters around the world noted that the positive response to the circulation campaign was an aid to winning new contributors to the fund.

A high point of the circulation drive was the week of May 1, when nearly 700 subscriptions were sold, many of them at rallies demanding legalization of undocumented workers. Hundreds of copies of the new pamphlet *Is a Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* were sold along with the subs.

"In the wake of the May Day actions and the excellent response the *Militant* got at them, there were spontaneous raises of pledges and additional con-

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Chicago students protest anti-immigrant Minutemen

BY BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO—A lively crowd of about 300 protested the appearance of Chris Simcox, president of the ultrarightist Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, at DePaul University here May 19. The Minutemen patrol the U.S.-Mexican border seeking to terrorize immigrants.

Students from DePaul and other campuses chanted, "What do we want? Legalization! When do we want it? Now!" and "Money for jobs and education—Stop the racist deportations!" They rallied for several hours in front of the building where Simcox was speaking.

A group of workers led by José Landaverde, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission in the predominantly Mexican neighborhood of Little Village, joined the protest. Some of them have had family members arrested and deported. Dozens of marchers made the 11-mile walk from Little Village to the DePaul campus for a 24-hour vigil against the Minutemen and the raids and deportations being conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

"Everyone is entitled to a better life," said DePaul student Loren Rojas. Rojas explained she had come to listen to and challenge Simcox, but was turned away since the campus authorities limited participation in the meeting to 200 people. No press or nonstudents were allowed inside. Speaking of the recent ICE raid in Postville, Iowa, Rojas said, "It's not fair that people get rounded up and corralled like animals."

Jacob Chacko, a student at Northern Illinois University, came with a group of 20 from that campus. "We're all immigrants in this country," he said. "Who's to say who can come in and who can't? Legalization would solve the immigration problem."

Ismael Cuevas, cochair of Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán (MEChA) at the University of Wisconsin, joined the protest carrying a huge Mexican flag. "The raids like the one in Iowa are a scare tactic," he said. "And the Minutemen abuse people crossing the border who are just trying to get decent wages to raise their families."

Militant/Jorge Lertora

Students protest outside DePaul University meeting for Chris Simcox, leader of Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, which patrols border to terrorize immigrants.

El Salvador solidarity group rejects registering as 'foreign agent'

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON—"We will not allow the Justice Department to stifle our voices," declared Alana Epstein, an activist in the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) here. She was addressing a picket line of 15 people May 17 in front of the John F. Kennedy Federal Building. The action was one of many organized by local CISPES chapters across the country.

In January CISPES received a letter from the Department of Justice saying it suspected the organization of being an "agent of a foreign principal," which would require it to register under the Foreign Agent Registration Act. The government claims CISPES has been hired by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) to do public relations and fundraising in the United States for the FMLN's presidential campaign in El Salvador. Presidential elections are scheduled for March 2009.

CISPES has refused to register as a foreign agent and says it will "continue our support for the Salvadoran struggle for social justice." Since the 1980s CISPES has organized activities in solidarity with the people of El Salvador and against U.S. military intervention in that country.

Toronto action will oppose roundup of 45 immigrants at warehouse

BY SUSIE BERMAN

TORONTO—A June 7 demonstration has been called against an immigration raid near here where 45 workers were arrested on charges of working illegally.

On May 6 police from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) raided SDR Distribution Services, a warehouse facility in Mississauga, just west of Toronto. Many of those arrested have since been released on bail.

No One Is Illegal (NOII), an immigrant rights organization, has called the protest action. According to Craig Fortier from NOII, many of those arrested are women who work as nannies under the Canadian government's "Live-in Caregiver Program." This program allows people to hire foreign workers as caregivers for children, elderly, and disabled people. The workers are only allowed to work for the person who sponsored them as caregivers and must live in the employer's home. As temporary workers, they are not covered under the general terms of Canada's Labour Protection Act.

Fortier explained that many of these temporary workers are from the Philippines. Many of those arrested are being charged with violating these provisions by taking second jobs at SDR.

The day of the raid, the Canadian minister of public safety, Stockwell Day, released a statement lauding the roundup. "This large-scale operation protects the integrity of our immigration program and reinforces the security and prosperity of Canada," he said.

According to the *Toronto Star*, the warehouse had been under surveillance since February. The raid was timed to coincide with the release of a report by Canada's auditor general, Sheila Fraser. The report criticized the CBSA for losing the whereabouts of 41,000 people currently facing deportation warrants. Many of these are said to be workers who come to Canada under temporary worker programs and stay when their contracts end. Ottawa issued 106,750 temporary foreign worker permits in 2006 and 103,000 in the first nine months of 2007.

THE MILITANT

Protest immigration raids!

The 'Militant' keeps its readers informed about working-class resistance to the government's attacks on immigrant workers, a fight vital to the future of all working people and our unions.

Militant/Jenny Shegos

March in Waterloo, Iowa, May 19, against Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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The Militant

Vol. 72/No. 23

Closing news date: May 28, 2008

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Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in July, and one week in August.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. **Telephone:** (212) 244-4899
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E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: for one-year send $35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: for one-year subscription send $65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: Send $65 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: Send Canadian $45 for one-year subscription to the Militant, 2238 Dundas St. West, Suite 201, Toronto, ON. Postal Code: M6R 3A9.

United Kingdom: £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: £50 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

U.S. diplomat in Cuba funneled money to counterrevolutionaries

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

Washington's top diplomat in Havana funneled money between Miami-based Cuban counterrevolutionaries and individuals on the island working to overthrow the revolution, according to evidence released by the Cuban government May 19.

Josefina Vidal, head of the North American department of Cuba's foreign ministry, revealed e-mails, letters, videos, and tapes documenting how U.S. Interests Section chief Michael Parmly transported funds from Miami-based exile Santiago Alvarez to counterrevolutionaries living in Cuba. Alvarez is currently in prison in the United States for illegal possession of weapons intended for armed attacks against Cuba's revolutionary government.

Havana has repeatedly denounced Washington's efforts to organize, promote, and sponsor counterrevolutionary activities in Cuba. The U.S. government's only response to the latest accusations has been to say that it provides "humanitarian aid" in Cuba.

"These facts violate Cuban laws, violate U.S. laws, and violate the norms of international law," said Cuba's foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque at a May 22 press conference.

Pérez Roque said that, in addition to transporting money from U.S.-based counterrevolutionaries to their Cuban counterparts, Parmly also loaned money to Alvarez, a wealthy real estate developer who fled to the United States shortly after the Jan. 1, 1959, victory of the Cuban Revolution.

For nearly five decades, backed and shielded by Washington, Alvarez has taken part in and organized actions aimed at the overthrow of Cuba's socialist revolution. He participated in mercenary attacks in the 1960s and '70s and was linked to an attempt to assassinate then-president Fidel Castro in Panama in 2000.

In 2001 he sent a group of mercenaries to invade Cuba's Villa Clara province in an effort to spark an armed counterrevolution, according to the Cuban newspaper *Granma*. The invasion was quickly defeated by Cuban border guards. At the time the Cuban government released tapes of Alvarez giving orders to bomb the Tropicana nightclub in Havana.

Alvarez is closely associated with CIA-trained exile Luis Posada Carriles, who was responsible for the 1976 bombing of a Cubana airplane that killed 73 people and the bombing of several hotels in Havana between 1997 and 1998.

UK: Hundreds protest bill to limit abortion

Getty/Cate Gillam

LONDON—"Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide!" chanted hundreds of young women and men in a spirited abortion rights protest outside Parliament here May 20. Inside, legislators debated several bills to reduce the legal limit for having an abortion from 24 weeks to as little as 12 weeks.

The protest was called by Abortion Rights, with the backing of the Trades Union Congress and the National Union of Students. Dozens also gathered in eve-of-vote pro-choice demonstrations in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

All the proposals before Parliament to cut the time period when women can choose abortion were defeated.

—ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ

Meat packers convicted of 'identity theft'

Continued from front page

did not face criminal charges have already been deported.

"This is an injustice," Yesmi Loera, 25, said in a phone interview from Postville. "We only come here to work." Loera, from San Luis Potosí, Mexico, is one of several dozen women with children released by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after the raid. She wears an electronic monitoring bracelet around her ankle 24 hours a day and is not allowed to leave Iowa until a future hearing.

"I don't know what the charges are against me or when the hearing will take place," Loera said. Her husband is being held at the jail in Newton, Iowa, on charges of identity theft. She has not been able to talk to him since the raid, although she has received one letter.

"I called the jail and they said I could not visit him because I am wearing the ankle bracelet," Loera said. "They won't let my brother who is a legal resident visit him either. They say only my husband's immediate relatives are allowed in."

Conditions vary depending on the jail. Detainees say they have been charged as much as $25 for a five-minute phone call.

Brothers of Alejandro Bustamante were allowed a five-minute visit. "We don't know what the charges are," a family member said May 25. "And he still has not been assigned a lawyer."

The mother of Ulises Regino has not been able to confirm where he is being held. There is no official list of all the detainees and where they are detained.

A front page article in the *Des Moines Register* featured Yesenia Cordero and Henry López. Cordero, 16, is from Mexico. Her husband López, 18, is from Guatemala. They have a one-year-old daughter. López is in jail; Cordero is "free", with the electronic monitoring device around her ankle.

Cordero, who worked on the scales at the plant, expects that she will be deported to Mexico and López to Guatemala. They have not seen each other since ICE agents found their hiding place in the plant, pointed guns at them and told them to come out. She doesn't know if they will ever see each other again.

Hundreds of people from Iowa and the region showed their solidarity with the workers affected by the raid by sending money and other aid, said Sister Mary McCauley, of St. Bridget's Catholic Church in Postville.

The raid and the sentences are unjust, McCauley said. "The real injustice is the way our people were treated like property at Agriprocessors, the slave-like conditions at work."

McCauley commented on the women who after the raid marched in protest in Waterloo May 18. "I saw some of the new Rosa Parks at the demonstration saying we are not criminals, we have a right to work and to support our children," she said. Parks became a prominent symbol of the civil rights movement when she refused to give her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955.

Loera was one of those at the march, her first ever. "It was good to march against *them*," she said, referring to ICE.

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—CALENDAR—

CANADA

Toronto

Protest Immigration Raid at SDR Distribution Services. Sat., June 7. 11:30 a.m. *Greater Toronto Enforcement Centre, at the International Centre, 6900 Airport Road. Buses will be leaving from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 252 Bloor St. West at 10:00 a.m. and from Hurontario St. and Dundas St. in Mississagua at 10:30. For more information, contact No One Is Illegal at nooneisillegal@riseup.net.*

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

GEORGIA

Carrollton

Free the Cuban Five! Speakers to be announced. Fri., June 6. 7:30 p.m. *907 South Park St., Suite C.*

Young socialists campaign to win release of Cuban 5

This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018; tel. (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY BEN JOYCE

NEW YORK—Young socialists around the country are actively building a June 14 conference here in New York City to widen support for the Cuban Five. They are stepping up their work with other defenders of political and workers rights to win new supporters to this important fight for justice.

The Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—are serving sentences ranging from 15 years to a double life term in U.S. jails.

Organizations in the New York/New Jersey area have called a one-day working conference at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. The gathering will plan fall activities, especially from September 12—the 10th anniversary of their arrest—to October 8, as part of an international campaign (see ad on page 3).

The five Miami residents were arrested by the FBI in 1998. They had been monitoring the activities of rightist Cuban-American groups in Florida that have organized attacks on Cuban soil with U.S. government blessing. In a federal frame-up trial they were convicted on false charges of "conspiracy to commit espionage" for the Cuban government; "conspiracy to act as an unregistered foreign agent"; and, in the case of Hernández, "conspiracy to commit murder."

On May 21 Young Socialists Ben O'Shaughnessy and Michael Ortega gave presentations about the Cuban Five defense campaign to the MEChA (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) chapter at the University of California at Davis. MEChA is a nationwide Chicano rights student organization.

Among those attending the MEChA meeting were several students who the previous night had learned about the case at a panel discussion on the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.*

O'Shaughnessy pointed to the unjust and arbitrary treatment meted out to the five men by U.S. authorities in the decade since they were arrested: from the repeated break-ins of their homes by FBI agents, to the 17 months they were put in solitary confinement before their trial, to the repeated denials of visas for the wives of two of the men to visit them in prison.

"The case of the five is a part of the broader assault by the U.S. rulers on the rights of workers and farmers," said O'Shaughnessy.

"Over the past 15 years, the same kind of methods the U.S. government used against the Cuban Five have been directed against wider numbers of working people," said Ortega.

Ortega pointed to activities supporters of the Cuban Five have organized around the country in recent months, including speaking engagements for defense lawyer Leonard Weinglass, film showings, and picket lines. He urged the MEChA chapter to become a supporter of the campaign to free the Cuban Five, to help sponsor educational activities on the case in the fall, and to consider participating in the June 14 conference in New York.

During the discussion, one student asked if the speakers thought it was important to connect the case of the Cuban Five with other political prisoners, such as Puerto Rican independence fighters or Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black rights activist framed up on charges of killing a cop.

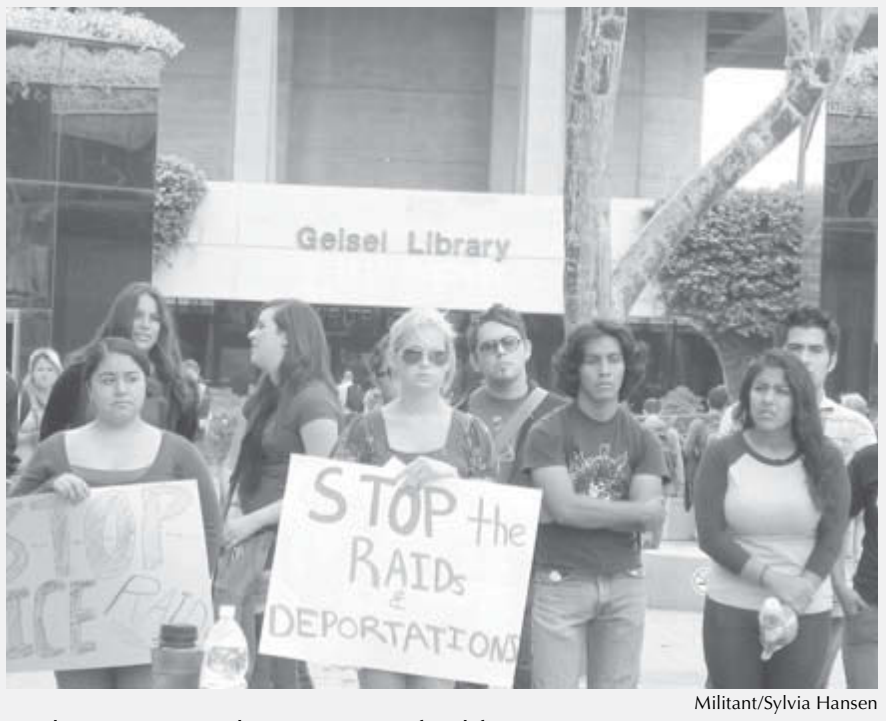
O'Shaughnessy said yes. He said it was important to reach out to all defenders of political rights, to those engaged in the fight for the legalization of all undocumented workers, and others in order to win the broadest support possible for the five.

In New York, Young Socialists are participating in the June 14 conference organizing committee, helping to coordinate the student/youth workshop and other aspects of the program. YS members have been meeting with students at Hunter College and other universities, as well as high school students in the city, who are now planning to attend the conference. They are organizing to use the summer months to circulate a petition demanding the release of the Cuban Five and to help plan campus meetings on the case, among other activities.

On May 23 a program on the Cuban Five was held at the Militant Labor Forum in New York. Speaking on the panel were Jessica Zannikos, a member of the Hunter College Undergraduate Student Government, and Emily Paul from the Young Socialists.

"Regardless of your views on Cuba," said Zannikos, "five innocent men have been in jail for nearly 10 years and together we need to fight for their freedom."

San Diego students protest immigration raids



Militant/Sylvia Hansen

Students protest at the University of California, San Diego, May 22, against raids of homes and businesses a week earlier by federal cops from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). On May 15, ICE cops searched the home of a UC San Diego student living in campus housing. The student worked at a San Diego bakery where 18 workers had been rounded up earlier that day. ICE reported that more than 900 immigrants were arrested in a "statewide enforcement surge" the first three weeks of May. According to the *San Diego Tribune*, 137 of those arrested were in the San Diego area—73 of them individuals targeted by the immigration cops for arrest, 64 simply caught up in the indiscriminate dragnet.

—PAUL PEDERSON

'Militant' Fund over the top

Continued from front page

tributions," said Andrea Morrell from New York. Seventy-eight subscriptions to the paper were sold on May Day by New York supporters.

"Most of those who contributed to the drive in San Francisco also donated last fall," reported Joel Britton, "but some increased what they gave this time, inspired by what's happening in politics and how effectively the *Militant* campaigns week after week for a course of action to strengthen the working-class side of the class struggle."

In all, supporters in eight cities raised their goals during the drive because of an increased response.

In Miami and other cities *Militant* supporters kept cans on tables when they were out selling the paper. Maggie Trowe from Miami reported that "One contributor, a Puerto Rican independence supporter, kept a big jar in his apartment and when friends came by to visit he encouraged them to drop a dollar or some change in." He raised $9.35 that way.

Bev Bernardo of Montreal reported that supporters there received a $25 contribution from a meat packer. "We'd asked him to renew his subscription, but not for a donation," said Bernardo. "The lesson: every *Militant* reader is a potential contributor."

Once again, thank you and congratulations to all those who worked to make this campaign a success.

Militant/Dan Fein

Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president Róger Calero, right, campaigns with *Militant* and socialist literature in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

$100,000 'Militant' Fund
Spring 2008 ♦ March 22 – May 18
Final chart

Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Philadelphia*	3,300	3,720	113%
Houston	2,500	2,738	110%
Seattle	7,000	7,565	108%
Washington, D.C.*	4,300	4,665	108%
Los Angeles*	9,500	10,184	107%
Twin Cities, MN*	5,500	5,820	106%
Carrollton, GA	4,700	4,907	104%
Boston	2,800	2,878	103%
Miami	3,000	3,082	103%
New York	15,000	15,422	103%
San Francisco*	13,000	13,335	103%
Chicago*	8,125	8,175	101%
Atlanta	4,000	4,008	100%
Des Moines, IA	2,000	2,000	100%
Newark, NJ	3,700	3,708	100%
Other		1,500	
U.S. total	88,425	93,707	106%
CANADA*	5,500	6,200	113%
NEW ZEALAND	3,200	3,390	106%
AUSTRALIA*	2,200	2,366	108%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	1,000	1,038	104%
Edinburgh	600	600	100%
UK total	1,600	1,638	102%
SWEDEN	1,000	1,069	107%
FRANCE	260	265	102%
Goal/Should be	**100,000**	**100,000**	**100%**
Total	**102,185**	**108,635**	**109%**

* increased quota

Panel on 'Our History'

Continued from front page

of Aztlán)—many of whom are active in the fight for immigrants' rights, in support of struggles by campus workers, and protests around other social issues—attended the meeting and took part in the discussion.

"While I was in Cuba I attended the annual book fair in Havana where I was first introduced to *Our History Is Still Being Written*," said student Ana Ochoa, one of the panelists. Ochoa studied in Havana during the winter 2007 quarter as part of a UCD program. While there, she attended an event at the Havana International Book Fair that featured the authors of the book, generals Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, and the book's editor Mary-Alice Waters.

Our History Is Still Being Written, published by Pathfinder Press, is built on interviews with the three generals, who as teenagers in the 1950s joined the revolutionary struggle to overthrow U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

'Battle of Ideas'

Ochoa said she had been struck by the campaign of Cuba's revolutionary government known as "the Battle of Ideas." In the book, she said, Sío Wong describes how by the late 1990s, 76,000 young people in Cuba were neither going to school nor working. In response, the Cuban government and mass organizations launched a series of social programs "to provide a way for these young people to contribute to the society. Educational programs were set up where they could study at no cost to themselves."

She added that the Battle of Ideas also refers to the need for Cubans to know their history, both hardships and accomplishments, so as to better understand current politics. This, she said, is an outcome of the socialist revolution that believes that education and culture should be accessible to all.

The program was kicked off by My Diem Nguyen, student affairs officer in Asian American Studies, who helped organize an April 23 demonstration protesting U.S. government plans to deport Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian immigrants.

Nguyen pointed out that protests by students today make the stories of the three Chinese Cuban generals very contemporary. "It was inspiring reading in the book how the movement began with students in school, with young people organizing," she said.

Example of Cuban agriculture

Wendy Ho, director of Asian American Studies, chaired the meeting and described how her own ancestors had arrived in Hawaii as agricultural workers on the plantations there. She pointed to the example described in the book of the development of urban agriculture in Cuba in the l990s in response to severe food shortages at the time. "We should look at this," she said, "given food riots in Africa, in Ethiopia, in the Americas, in Haiti, where there is hunger and scarcities of the basic staples like rice and wheat."

Panelist Luz Mena, a professor of Women and Gender Studies, teaches a popular "Women and Revolution" course on campus and lived in Cuba in the early 1990s when the economic crisis known as the Special Period was most severe. She frequently travels to Cuba researching the history of 19th century Havana.

Beginning in the 1840s, she told the meeting, Chinese were brought in the hundreds of thousands to replace and also work alongside African slaves on the plantations. "There were racist motives behind this. The Spanish colonialists feared a Black takeover in Cuba like had happened in Haiti," she said. "They hoped the Chinese would be more docile." This did not turn out to be the case, Mena noted, describing resistance by Chinese workers in the face of racist treatment.

Joined struggle as teenagers

Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, described how the three generals became the revolutionists they are today. "They did not start out as socialists," she noted.

"They were teenagers when they decided they were not going to accept a life of brutalities and indignities under a dictatorship and joined the struggle to overthrow it. When that struggle triumphed they set out to build a society with a greater degree of social equality. They were part of the revolutionary forces that carried out a massive land reform, mobilized young people to go to the countryside and into the barrios to wipe out illiteracy, slashed rents, made racial discrimination in hiring and access to public facilities illegal, and brought women in greater numbers into the workforce.

"As they carried out such democratic measures they came into head-on conflict with the economic interests of the wealthy property owners of Cuba and the United States.

"In the face of this, they simply refused to back down," Waters said, "organizing millions of working people to take the fields and factories and mines into their own hands."

Waters tied the broad interest in *Our History is Still Being Written* to the deepening working-class resistance in the United States today and the vanguard place of many workers and students who are immigrants.

Question on Cuba military

In the lively discussion that followed the presentations, a Cuban-born student questioned whether it was positive for generals, and the Cuban army, to be involved in so many things. "I don't trust the U.S. army to spread its influence, to be in education and other areas," he said.

"As regards the U.S. army I agree with you 100 percent," replied Waters. "The U.S. army is an imperialist army that does not act in the interests of you or me. It defends capitalism and U.S. property interests around the world."

"The Cuban army is the opposite," she said. "It's a class question. The Revolutionary Armed Forces were born in the struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship, in the defense of Cuba from imperialism, as we saw at the Bay of Pigs, and during the 'missile' crisis. This is reflected in the composition of the armed forces. They defend the interests of Cuba's working people. They have a policy that 50 percent of the students entering the officer training schools come from working-class and peasant backgrounds."

"Unlike the former Soviet Union, China, or Vietnam, there is no privileged officer caste," Waters said. "In the 1980s, when there was pressure from the Soviet Union to do the opposite, they decisively rejected privileges for military officers like special hospitals and resorts and extra rations."

Access to cell phones

Cat Callaway, an agriculture program student who visited Cuba in 2006 to learn more about its urban farming pro-

Continued on page 9

U.S. socialist candidate tours New Zealand

Militant/Mike Tucker

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Róger Calero (in white shirt), the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, joins representatives of the Maori community from Ruatoki who traveled here to tell him about the massive police raid on their rural valley last October using new "antiterrorism" laws. The activists helped organize a fight-back that forced the government to drop terrorism charges, although defendants still face criminal charges.

Calero is on tour in New Zealand, accompanied by Chauncey Robinson (at far right), a leader of the Young Socialists from San Francisco.

Thirty-five people attended a May 17 Militant Labor Forum here where Calero, Robinson, and Mike Tucker from the Communist League in New Zealand spoke. Calero laid out a working-class response to the unfolding capitalist crisis and described the May Day political strikes and demonstrations in the United States that have signaled the development of a new working-class vanguard. Because of the actions of immigrant and other workers, he said, "May Day is here to stay." Earlier that day, Calero and Robinson addressed a meeting at the Latin American Community Center.

—PATRICK BROWN

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

June 10, 1983

NORFOLK, Virginia—The fight to defend desegregation and busing took an important step forward here with one of the largest civil rights actions in this city's history.

Upwards of 10,000 people, mostly Black workers and students, responded May 13 to the call by Black church leaders to demonstrate against the Norfolk school board's plans to dump busing for the city's elementary school system.

The demonstrators chanted and sang as they walked the route to Norfolk City Hall.

The march was the culmination of a year-long struggle led by the Coalition for Quality Education against attempts to reverse the educational gains won by Blacks and against the return to a "neighborhood schools" program.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

June 9, 1958

Far from ringing down the final curtain, de Gaulle's capture of the premiership has only opened France's turbulent drama of social and political crisis in France.

The French capitalist class agreed to de Gaulle's overthrow of parliamentary government because it was incapable of getting French imperialism out of its blind alley. This impasse has resulted from the worldwide wave of colonial revolutions. Since World War II French imperialism has lost political control of its Mideast protectorates (Syria and Lebanon), Indo-China (The northern half lost economically as well as politically; in South Viet Nam, French political domination replaced by U.S. influence), Tunisia, and Morocco. For almost four years now it has sought vainly to put down the independence struggle in Algeria.

THE MILITANT

Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

June 10, 1933

Workers, organized and unorganized, skilled and unskilled, have downed tools and fought bitter battles against starvation wages and worsening conditions in the last few weeks.

In Allentown, Pa. and the neighboring town of Northampton, women and children struck against starvation wage rates. Seven hundred fifty girls struck three shirt factories in Shamokin. Electrical workers of Denver, Colo., won their fight against a wage cut and also received the 30 hour week in a three weeks battle.

Across the river from Washington D.C., unorganized women struck against a 10 percent cut in a shirt factory.

That this ripple of strikes will grow into a wave of gigantic proportion with the efforts to increase industrial production on the present low wage rate is assured.

Carpenters in S.F.

Continued from front page

Latinos continued to be hired. Black and Latino workers were put on separate crews. Few Blacks ever worked a full 40-hour week, while Latinos frequently worked overtime. One boss told Latino workers they could do substandard work on a set of housing units because only Blacks would be living there.

In February carpenters testified before the Neighborhood Services Committee of the city's Board of Supervisors. As *El Tecolote*, a bilingual newspaper here reported, "worker after worker detailed how their money was stolen and how project supervisors and foremen attempted to divide Latinos and African Americans."

El Tecolote quoted carpenter Gregory Hall as testifying that the construction bosses "told us we were too slow. So we sat down with AIMCO and (they told us) the only way they would hire another community resident is if they put Latinos on one wall and African Americans on another wall and we would race to see if we could keep up with the Latinos (and only) then they would hire another African American."

Apolinar Cornejo, who wasn't yet in the union, told the committee, "When the union reps would come, the company supervisors would hide us in a warehouse." He said that the bosses "would say we had to share our checks with the foreman like the other Latinos do. They wouldn't let us associate with the African American workers."

On May Day, carpenters Gregory Hall and Richard Rankins spoke to several thousand young people and workers at the immigrant rights rally at the Civic Center.

Hall, a carpenter for 27 years and a member of Carpenters Local 22, says things are better now at his worksite, since the workers forced AIMCO to replace several of the subcontractors who were pitting immigrant workers against Blacks.

Hall helped initiate the struggle to end the practice of subcontractors stealing between $100 and $400 per week from the paychecks of at least a dozen immigrants working as carpenters at these sites. He circulated a petition among carpenters denouncing the extortion by bosses and got it out to local, district, and national carpenters' union officials.

Hector Rodríguez, a carpenter for 11 years and member of Local 713, and Richard Rankins, a carpenter for more than 30 years and member of Local 22, addressed some three dozen people at the Militant Labor Forum here May 16. Rodríguez and Rankins are plaintiffs in the suit and part of the ongoing fight against racist practices by the construction bosses. They were joined at the forum by other carpenters, who participated in the discussion.

Rankins detailed what he called "this nightmare" of repeated racist practices. Fighting back, he said, was not for the money, but "it's the principle, of right versus wrong." He said he would like to see those responsible put in jail.

Rodríguez told how several weeks after being hired last summer, a boss started taking $100 a week from his paychecks, claiming it was a union fee. A boss later confronted him, saying, "I hear you're rebelling. Now it will be $200 a week." Rodríguez discussed this extortion with a union official, he said, and afterward, bosses threatened him and castigated him for being like "a little girl."

Gerardo Sánchez, a meatpacking worker and Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. House of Representatives in the 12th C.D., also spoke. He stressed the continuing importance of the fight to maintain affirmative action in the hiring of Black workers. He said the bosses try to use the fact that millions of immigrants lack legal status as a "tool against the unions." He underlined the importance of the participation of the union carpenters in the May Day rally for legalization of undocumented workers.

"The struggle of these brothers is inspiring other workers," Sánchez said. "It is touching something that workers know is important—overcoming the divide-and-rule tactics that bosses use in every workplace. It is through such fights that the unions will be strengthened. That will lay the basis for a labor party based on the unions, a party to represent the interests of workers."

A lively discussion ensued and a collection was taken for La Raza Centro Legal to help cover the carpenters' legal expenses.

Militant photos by Eric Simpson

Carpenters speak out on their fight against racist and discriminatory practices of AIMCO bosses at May 16 San Francisco Militant Labor Forum. Above: Hector Rodríguez, member of Carpenters Local 713, speaks during discussion period. Inset: Richard Rankins, member of Carpenters Local 22, speaks from podium.

California man shot in the back by cops

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LONG BEACH, California—"It was cold-blooded murder right in front of kids. The cops took an innocent life. They deserve to be in jail," said David Duong, 24.

His uncle, Roketi Su'e, a 46-year old Samoan man, was killed by Long Beach police May 17 as he was leaving a neighbor's birthday party. He was unarmed.

Numerous witnesses in this Samoan and Black working-class neighborhood in Long Beach, a city near Los Angeles, tell how they watched in horror as the cops assaulted Su'e, who had terminal cancer and weighed 120 pounds. Cops Tasered him, knocked him to the ground, kicked him, and finally shot him several times as he lay on his stomach.

"After the second kick, he didn't move, "said Llyssa Pagota, who organized the party. "When a friend who is a nurse wanted to give him first aid, the cops threatened her," she said.

The police and media have portrayed Su'e as a violent suspect whom the cops were unable to control. The officers claim they shot Su'e because they feared for their lives.

After the shooting, 40 neighbors, friends, and relatives protested the police killing. Several now face charges.

"I was actually just standing there in the middle of the group. The officers said 'Get back' as they rushed the crowd," said Cranston Howard, a Teamsters member, who lives at the end of the block. "I was hit with a flashlight and thrown to the ground. At the county hospital they sewed up my leg, which was wide open, and then sent me to jail. They charged me with resisting arrest and obstructing justice. I didn't do anything."

"My son, Michael Robinson, and his girlfriend, Saquanna Scott, are charged with making a 'terroristic threat' against a police officer," said Patricia Mathis. "Saquanna was filming it on her cell phone, which the police destroyed. Later that night, the police came back for them. They have been in jail since May 17."

"What kind of charges are these?" asked Mathis. "Documenting police brutality is not a crime."

Arlene Rubinstein is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the 37th Congressional District.

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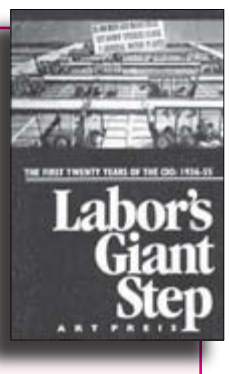

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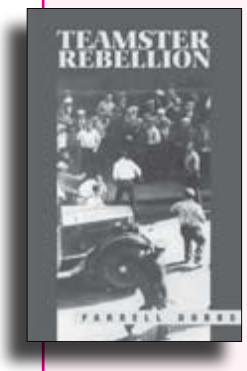

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N.Y. police say killer cops 'violated internal guidelines'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—Seven police officers involved in the shooting death of Sean Bell were charged May 20 with violating internal police guidelines.

The administrative charges were filed nearly a month after Queens Supreme Court Justice Arthur Cooperman cleared three city police officers of all charges in the 50-shot barrage on Nov. 25, 2006, that killed Bell, a 23-year-old African American, and seriously wounded two of his friends. The judge argued that the prosecution had not proved that the shooting was unjustified. The ruling provoked widespread protest.

The three detectives who stood trial in the case—Gescard Isnora, Michael Oliver, and Marc Cooper—along with officer Michael Carey are now charged with "discharging their firearms outside of department guidelines." Lt. Gary Napoli, the commanding officer, is cited for "failure to supervise the operation." Two other detectives, Robin Knapp and Sgt. Huey McNeal, are charged with "failing to ensure a thorough crime scene investigation."

If found guilty, the officers could face disciplinary action as minor as lost vacation days or as severe as termination. Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said that these charges would not be acted upon until the Justice Department completes its investigation of whether the acquitted police officers violated federal criminal civil rights statutes.

Impact of soaring food prices theme of summit in Nicaragua

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Representatives of the governments of 14 Latin American and Caribbean nations held an emergency summit in Managua, Nicaragua, May 7 to discuss the impact of soaring food prices on the semicolonial world.

The conference was convened under the auspices of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, a trade bloc initiated by the governments of Cuba and Venezuela in 2004 as an alternative to Washington's "free trade" accords.

The governments of Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Venezuela all sent heads of state or top-level representatives.

According to the World Bank, global food prices have shot up 83 percent over the past three years. Many basic staples, like rice, corn, and wheat, have more than doubled in price.

'Not a passing crisis'

"This is a structural problem generated by today's international economic order, not a passing crisis that can be alleviated with palliative or emergency measures," said Esteban Lazo, vice president of Cuba's Council of State, who headed that country's delegation to the summit.

Lazo said that while high oil prices, climate change, the diversion of grain to the production of biofuels, and capitalist speculation contribute to spiraling food prices, "the essence of the crisis is not to be found in these recent phenomena."

Rather, the Cuban leader said, "it lies in the unequal and unfair distribution of wealth at the global level."

Lazo also took on the argument that rising food prices are simply the result of greater demand in countries like India and China. "To attribute the crisis to increased consumption by important sectors in certain developing countries . . . is not only an unfounded argument," he said, "it also conveys a racist and discriminatory message, which portrays as a problem the fact that millions of human beings should have access, for the first time, to decent and healthy food."

Many governmental leaders at the summit pointed to policies imposed by wealthy industrialized countries and their financial institutions that have destroyed local agricultural markets in the countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, particularly over the last two decades.

Among them was Honduran president Manual Zelaya, who pointed out that Honduras—which once produced 90 percent of its domestic demand—today imports 85 percent of the rice it consumes from the United States. In 1990, facing a $3.6 billion debt to foreign lenders, the Honduran government dismantled protective import tariffs in order to receive loans from the World Bank. Today there are 1,300 rice farmers in the country, compared to 20,000 in 1989.

Skyrocketing prices are particularly devastating for those countries dependent on imports to feed their populations. Haiti, a country dependent on imported grains, is facing massive food shortages. Between February 2007 and January 2008, there were more than 400 demonstrations there against the inflated price of basic foodstuffs, according to UN estimates.

Many of the government representatives said bank loans, regional trade accords, and other measures were needed to boost local agricultural production. This, they advanced, would counter the weight of highly productive, subsidized large-scale capitalist agriculture in the industrialized countries.

Venezuelan foreign minister Nicolás Maduro pointed to steps his government has taken to use oil revenue to boost food production. He presented a proposal that included the establishment of a Latin American bank of seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs to "reduce costs for small and medium producers," a tax on international flights that would finance agriculture, and called for a summit of oil-producing nations in the region to establish a "special agricultural fund."

Lazo said, "The problem, as it manifests itself in our region, is, in essence, linked to the precarious situation of small farmers and rural populations living in underdeveloped countries, and the oligopolistic nature of the large transnational companies that control the agricultural food industry."

That was the situation in Cuba prior to 1959, when some 80 percent of arable land was held by private estates owned by wealthy U.S. and Cuban families. The triumph that year of a socialist revolution opened the door for sweeping change in the organization of Cuban agriculture. The new revolutionary government enacted a land reform limiting private landholdings to 165 acres and distributing 100,000 land titles to rural workers and peasants.

"The truly decisive move," said Lazo, "is to undertake a profound, structural change of the current international economic and political order, an order which is antidemocratic, unjust, exclusive, and unsustainable.

"Now, it is time to act with unity, audacity, solidarity, and a practical spirit," Lazo said. "If this is our common goal, you can rely on Cuba."

The conference's final declaration agreed "to reject the world's industrialized countries' practices of agricultural subsidies and internal aid that impact on the agriculture of impoverished countries and distort trade." The document also called on countries to prioritize the use of agricultural products for food, not fuel, production. All governments present, with the exception of Costa Rica and El Salvador, signed the declaration.

Associated Press

Farmers, unionists and others block roads in Tegucigalpa, Honduras's capital, April 17 to protest impact of food prices.

Obama, McCain spar over foreign policy

Continued from front page

over the handling of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. An early proponent of the "surge" military escalation, McCain's road toward the Republican nomination has rested in large part on the success of the stepped-up U.S. operations in Iraq over the past year.

'Greatest threat to America'

In answering McCain, Obama made it clear that Iran would be a special target of his administration. In a May 17 speech, he said that, due to the Bush administration's policies, Iran now "poses the greatest threat to America and Israel in the Middle East in a generation."

The Illinois senator said that if elected, he would issue an ultimatum to Tehran. "If it abandons its nuclear program, support for terror, and threats to Israel, then Iran can join the community of nations. If not, Iran will face deeper isolation and steeper sanctions," Obama said.

Obama also vowed not to negotiate with Hamas, the ruling Palestinian party in the Gaza Strip. He repeated his call to escalate the U.S. war in Afghanistan, claiming that "Al-Qaeda's leadership is stronger because we took our eye off the ball in Afghanistan."

With broad bipartisan support, the Pentagon is building up its Afghan force to deepen the war there. With the recent arrival of 3,000 U.S. marines, Washington currently has an army of 34,000 in Afghanistan—the highest U.S. troop level there since the 2001 invasion.

Overthrowing Cuban Revolution

McCain and Obama both gave speeches in late May outlining their commitment to continue Washington's economic and political war aimed at undermining and overthrowing the socialist revolution in Cuba.

At a May 20 meeting in Miami, McCain said Obama's pledge to meet with Cuban president Raúl Castro would "send the worst possible message to Cuba's dictators." McCain demanded that Cuba "schedule internationally monitored elections" before Washington take any steps to ease the U.S. trade embargo.

The U.S. embargo against Cuba was established in 1962, shortly after the triumph of the socialist revolution. Under the Clinton administration it was further tightened to include measures that penalize third countries for trading with Cuba and limit remittances from Cuban Americans to Cubans living on the island.

Obama answered McCain's remarks three days later in a major foreign policy speech titled "Renewing U.S. Leadership in the Americas." He spoke before the Cuban American National Foundation, which was founded by wealthy Cubans who left the island after the 1959 revolution.

'Free and fair' elections

Obama demanded that Cuba submit to elections that Washington deems are "free and fair." Until the Cuban government submits to Washington's demands, Obama pledged that his administration will "maintain the embargo."

Obama also said the United States is losing influence in Latin America to China, the European powers, and even the Iranian government.

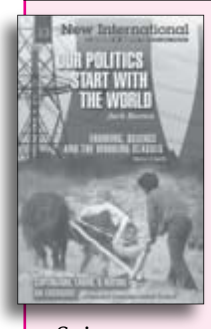
"Demagogues like Hugo Chávez have stepped into the vacuum," Obama said. He said the Venezuelan president uses "anti-American rhetoric, authoritarian government, and checkbook diplomacy," and has been "coddling the repressive regime in Cuba." He said Chávez's "stale vision" has made inroads from Nicaragua to Bolivia.

It is illegal for most U.S. citizens to travel to Cuba. During the Bush administration, Cuban Americans with family in Cuba were limited to one 14-day visit every three years. This measure is very unpopular among Cuban Americans.

In contrast, Obama said he would "immediately allow unlimited family travel and remittances to the island." He said, "It's time to let Cuban American money make their families less dependent upon the Castro regime."

New International no. 13

Our Politics Start with the World



By Jack Barnes

"We are part of an international class that has no homeland. That's not a slogan. That's not a moral imperative. It is a recognition of the class reality of economic, social, and political life in the imperialist epoch."

Also includes: "Farming, Science, and the Working Classes" and "Capitalism, Labor, and Nature.

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The FBI campaign against socialist leader DeBerry

Below is an excerpt from Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. It provides an in-depth look at the covert and illegal FBI counterintelligence program aimed at disruption of the labor, Black rights, and anti–Vietnam War movements. The excerpt deals with the FBI's probe against socialist leader Clifton DeBerry in the 1960s. DeBerry, a militant trade unionist, had been a member of the Communist Party USA (CP) in the 1940s. He broke with the CP and joined the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1950s.* *Copyright © 1989 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

Militant/ Eli Finer

Clifton DeBerry and Malcolm X at the Militant Labor Forum in New York, 1964. DeBerry, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president that year, chaired the meeting.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY NELSON BLACKSTOCK

"A review is being conducted of CLIFTON DE BERRY's file to determine if there is anything derogatory in his background which might cause embarrassment to the SWP if publicly exposed."

Those words appear in a secret FBI memorandum dated October 17, 1963. Of the nearly 1,000 pages of Cointelpro files released in response to the SWP suit, more concern Clifton DeBerry than any other individual. In 1964 DeBerry became the first Black person ever to run for president of the United States, when he was nominated by the SWP.

Why was the FBI so interested in DeBerry? What was it about this man and his political activities that caused the FBI to devote so much energy to trying to discredit him?

To find the answer to these questions, the *Militant* talked with DeBerry about his background—his many years of activity in the union movement and the Black liberation struggle. . . .

In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its historic decision on school desegregation. Soon the country would witness a new Black civil rights movement and the opening stages of a new radicalization. At this time the center of DeBerry's political activity shifted from the trade-union movement to another arena of the class struggle.

DeBerry was active in the Chicago chapter of the NAACP and in the Washington Park Forum, a Black community organization. In 1955, news of the lynching of Emmett Till, a Black youth from Chicago, jolted the Black community. Till was murdered by racists while visiting relatives in Mississippi. DeBerry was instrumental in organizing a mass meeting to protest the lynching.

The 1955–56 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott to end segregation on the buses signaled the beginning of the civil rights movement. In Chicago, DeBerry organized a Station Wagons to Montgomery Committee, which raised funds to purchase vehicles for use by boycotters.

DeBerry personally delivered one of the station wagons to Montgomery, where he stayed at the home of E.D. Nixon. Like DeBerry, Nixon was a veteran of the union movement who brought his organizational and political know-how to the new Black civil rights struggle. Nixon was actually the central organizer of the boycott.

"I talked with Nixon about the boycott movement," DeBerry recalled. "For the first time I met Dr. Martin Luther King, who had been persuaded to enter the fight by Nixon."

In 1960 DeBerry moved to New York. That same year a sit-in movement to desegregate public accommodations began in the South. Supporters of the desegregation fight organized a boycott of the Woolworth chain in cities outside the South in a successful attempt to bring added pressure to end segregation. DeBerry threw himself into building the Woolworth boycott in Brooklyn.

In the early 1960s a Black nationalist mood was becoming visible in the ghettos of the North, and no one better articulated this new consciousness than Malcolm X.

"We began to make contact with Malcolm when he was still the main spokesman for the Nation of Islam," DeBerry said. "In late 1963 I went on a speaking tour. Malcolm was touring at the same time, and I would go to see him whenever I could."

It was during a tour stop in Chicago that the FBI arranged to have DeBerry arrested in order to create a scandal they hoped to use to discredit him. Just as DeBerry was about to address a socialist meeting, the Chicago police stormed into the building, hauled him to the station, and booked him on charges of nonsupport of his ex-wife. . . .

The FBI followed up this arrest by devoting enormous attention to trying to get the news media to report both the incident and DeBerry's earlier arrests for "labor trouble."

The 1964 Campaign

On January 7, 1964, the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party announced the nomination of DeBerry as the SWP's candidate for president.

Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection, and he was opposed by Barry Goldwater. Johnson campaigned as a "peace candidate" who was opposed to escalating the war, while Goldwater favored increased bombing. Most Americans took Johnson's peace rhetoric for good coin, and he won a landslide victory.

Virtually the entire left supported Johnson's candidacy. Among the most enthusiastic bakers of the Democratic candidate were the members of the CP, whose attitude was summed up in the title of a pamphlet by Gus Hall: *The Eleventh Hour—Defeat The New Fascist Threat!*

The SWP, in contrast, clearly nailed Johnson as the imperialist warrior he was. The historical record now shows how right the SWP was.

June BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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EDITORIAL

Join effort to free Cuban Five!

In September the Cuban Five will have spent a decade in U.S. prisons. For 10 years they have been fighting for their release. Today there are greater numbers of people who, as they learn the facts, will be outraged at their frame-up, unfair trial, brutal treatment, and long sentences and will lend their names to the campaign to tell the U.S. government: Enough is enough! Free them now!

We urge you to build and participate in the June 14 regional conference in New York City to broaden support for this campaign. The conference will plan a stepped-up defense effort in the fall, including a petition campaign, campus and other speaking engagements, and a national demonstration.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, and René González are working-class fighters framed up by the U.S. government. Under the banner "An injury to one is an injury to all," the labor movement has a long tradition of defending those like the five—from Sacco and Vanzetti to civil rights fighters to Puerto Rican patriots locked up in U.S. prisons today.

This case is part of the fight against the assaults on workers' rights the U.S. employers and government have escalated over the past decade and a half. Thousands have been victimized by these attacks, from Troy Davis—a Black man in Georgia on death row for 16 years despite the recantation of trial witnesses—to Guantánamo inmates jailed "indefinitely" without charges, to meatpacking workers locked up on criminal charges of "identity theft."

The Cuban Five are in the front ranks of those fighting these assaults. They have extended solidarity to union militants and other political prisoners, and circulate literature on working-class struggles among fellow inmates.

Washington has enacted laws that have expanded mandatory prison sentences, authorized "preventive detention" without bail on the basis of "secret evidence," restricted appeal rights, and expanded the use of the death penalty. Prison lockdowns and solitary confinement have increasingly become the norm.

The five men were convicted based on evidence collected through secret, warrantless searches of their homes—a violation of the U.S. Constitution's Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable search and seizure.

The FBI burglars couldn't dig up evidence to frame them up for any serious offense. So the government resorted to "conspiracy" charges, a notorious frame-up weapon wielded by bosses against militant workers.

Hernández, Guerrero, and Labañino are all serving life sentences for "conspiracy to commit espionage"—with no proof they possessed or delivered a single classified document.

Particularly outrageous is the accusation of "conspiracy to commit murder," used to sentence Hernández to a *double* life term. He was charged for actions taken by a sovereign government—Cuba—in self-defense against incursions by planes flown by a right-wing group over its airspace in 1996.

The five have faced brutal conditions, including 17 months in solitary confinement before their trial.

Washington has refused visas to Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, the wives of Gerardo Hernández and René González, respectively, to visit their husbands.

The New York conference will include workshops for youth and students, religious groups, civil liberties activists, unionists, community organizations, and others. In every local area, plans can be made now to build this conference and to launch activities this fall in a strong, renewed campaign for the release of the Cuban Five.

UC Davis meeting on 'Our History'

Continued from page 5

grams, asked whether or not the growing accessibility of things like cell phones and computers "will lead to a drop in people willing to do this work."

Waters said that the possibility of broader access to cell phones for Cubans reflects the economic progress being made in Cuba today. The primary reason for the previous restriction on cell phone availability, she said, was that Cuba did not yet have the technological infrastructure to meet the demand.

"Agriculture is hard work," Waters emphasized. "When youth have the opportunity to go to the university the draw away from the land is real. That's true everywhere. The answer is greater mechanization and increased productivity."

Waters noted that every time in the course of the revolution that Cuba has faced a crisis in agriculture or other production, "it is the working people themselves who have been involved in finding answers and correcting the course. That is what a socialist revolution is all about."

"For many in my generation, we know little about Cuba except for hearing through the media of Fidel and Che, with Fidel being portrayed as the absolute bad guy, and Che being turned into a pop icon," said freshman Veronica Lopez after the meeting. "What stood out for me in the discussion was learning that this is a revolution that brought down racism."

"I learned a lot from the panel," said MEChA activist Cristal Muñoz. "I found especially interesting what the Cubans did fighting in Angola," referring to the 1975–89 internationalist mission in which hundreds of thousands of Cuban troops helped defeat the invasion of Angola by the South African apartheid army.

"It was good to see that the generals, despite their being older, still keep going," added Muñoz.

A dozen students joined other participants afterward at a nearby restaurant to continue the discussion, relating stories of how they organized and participated in May Day and other actions, and how they defended their right to free speech against rightist forces on campus such as the Young Republicans.

LETTERS

May Day in Honduras

I spent May 1 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, which is the industrial center of the country. Thousands of unionized workers, peasants, and fighters for women's rights marched 2.5 miles to demand agrarian reform, an end to the violence against women, no to privatization of industry, and water rights. There were banners demanding an increase in wages to offset the higher cost of living.

I also attended a meeting to build the march a few days before. I was able to take the floor and explain the revival of May Day in the United States being driven by millions of immigrant workers demanding legalization.

John Langford
Park City, Utah

Sean Bell

Recently, all police officers implicated in the ruthless murder of Sean Bell have been acquitted. This comes as no surprise, as the capitalist system protects its own. Working people can show solidarity by getting involved in the various demonstrations against this act of brutality.

Walter Smolarek
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bridge collapse

Last year the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis collapsed. Nearly a year later, a report concludes it was a "design error." This is false. They knew for 17 years that the bridge was in poor condition, as a result 13 people died and 145 were injured. The government officials responsible should be tried for murder.

Tom Bauman
New York, New York

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

UK elections: 40-year low for Labour Party

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Recent elections here registered a big decline in support for the governing Labour Party.

In May 1 local elections in England and Wales, Labour's share of the national vote dropped to 24 percent, falling into third place behind the Liberal Democrats. This was the party's worst showing in 40 years.

In the vote for London mayor, Kenneth Livingstone, the Labour incumbent, was defeated by Conservative Boris Johnson.

Working people have turned away from Labour, holding the government responsible for declining real incomes. Prime Minister Gordon Brown has imposed a 2 percent limit on public-sector pay rises. He also abolished the reduced income tax rate for people on very low wages, cutting the take-home pay of 5.3 million workers.

Official inflation is currently running at 4.5 percent. The accountancy firm Ernst & Young reports that disposable household income has fallen 17.5 percent in four years. Food and diesel prices have risen by 12 percent and 11 percent respectively this year.

Labour's electoral victories over the past decade have depended on support from the middle classes and better-off workers. These layers are among those most affected by tightening credit in the housing market. The number of new mortgages has reached a 33-year low, falling a full 40 percent in the past year. Home repossessions rose 17 percent between January and March of this year.

Prime Minister Brown has also lost the backing of sections of the ruling class now considering that the Conservative Party, led by David Cameron, may be a better option for making progress in dismantling the social wage won by working people, from education and medical benefits to welfare.

The government faced criticism for its decision last year to withdraw British troops from Basra, Iraq. Republican presidential nominee John McCain says the British forces should have stayed "longer and larger." Following an offensive by Iraqi government forces in Basra against militias in the city this April, the government reversed course and postponed plans to further reduce troop levels in Iraq from 4,000 to 2,500.

In the local elections the ultraright British National Party won its first seat on the Greater London Assembly and increased its numbers of councilors across England and Wales from 84 to more than 100.

Parties presenting left reformist platforms fared badly. George Galloway, the Respect Party's only member of Parliament, failed to get the 5 percent of the vote needed for election to the London Assembly, while the Left List, led by the British Socialist Workers Party, polled 0.92 percent of the vote.

Jonathan Silberman contributed to this article.

From **Their Transformation and Ours in *New International* number 12**

"The imperialist character of these "Social Democratic," "Socialist," and "Labor" parties has undergone no fundamental change for nine decades. They have, however, converged in their political character and functioning with imperialist bourgeois parties such as the Democratic Party in the United States. While maintaining an electoral base in the working class, they have sought, above all, to consolidate expanded support in the middle classes and have organized to weaken institutional controls . . . by the trade union movement over their policies and course." —$16

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